

i am not even among  
the top ten fattest people  
in the commemorative postage-stamp pool.

#### I'LL PACK ANOTHER ON OUR NEXT TRIP

near the end of the trip  
my wife discovers that i have  
been carrying in my bag for over  
three weeks a new somewhat flattened  
spare roll of toilet paper.

this discovery excites shimmering mirth.

as for me, i can't think of anything,  
booze not excluded,  
that i would less like to run out of,  
or have to beg for.

#### WHY I GO TO ART EXHIBITS

it isn't because the originals are always  
superior to their reproductions: some  
are; some aren't. sometimes the galleries  
are inappropriately lighted. almost  
always they are overcrowded, and the  
stagewhispers are ludicrous. usually  
one searches in vain for a place  
to rest one's ass.

it isn't just because, afterwards, we  
treat ourselves to meatloaf, borscht,  
stuffed cabbage rolls, pirogi at  
gorky's cafe by the deserted flower markets.

it isn't even that i drive us home  
on surface roads through neighborhoods  
we otherwise would have no knowledge of.

it isn't even that i cherish these  
rare days alone with my daughter,  
my son, my wife.

it's that for a few suspended moments i  
am inches away from a piece of cloth  
that has somehow, through the mysteries  
of commerce, compromise, and coincidence

made its way to me from the human being  
who worked with it. it is a relic and  
talisman, more authentic than  
the shroud of turin.